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ABSTRACT

Discussions of teacher participation in the reform literature do not take into account the different meanings of the term, teacher participation. This paper uses a critical perspective to review the main approaches to teacher participation; to bring to light issues these approaches fail to address; and to offer alternatives. It is argued that calls for teacher empowerment and involvement have been framed almost exclusively in terms that advance management and administrative agendas for reform. For urban schools, the emphasis on teacher involvement belongs to a "second wave" of educational reform that comes on the heels of the basic skills era. The approaches reviewed include bureaucratic management, transformational and shared leadership, and team and community building. The latter approaches are an improvement over bureaucratic management, but they must take three problems into account: (1) how to maintain reforms undertaken by "transformational" leaders; (2) how to ensure that "participation" does not sanction dominant interests over silenced ones (including those of urban communities); and (3) how to address lack of participation at the systemic level. Insights from the literature on worker/democratic/humanistic participation are woven into concluding recommendations. (Contains 45 references.) (Author/LL)

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A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN URBAN SCHOOLS: A CRITIQUE

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RUNNING HEAD: TEACHER PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN URBAN SCHOOLS

By

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Discussions of teacher participation in the reform literature do not take into account the different meanings of the term. This paper uses a critical perspective to review the main approaches to teacher participation; bring to light issues they fail to address; and suggest alternatives. Approaches reviewed include bureaucratic management (i.e. for urban schools, the basic skills era); transformational and shared leadership; team/community building. The latter approaches are an improvement over bureaucratic management, but must take cognizance of three problems: how to maintain reforms undertaken by "transformational" leaders; how to ensure that "participation" does not privilege dominant interests over silenced ones (including those of urban communities); and how to address lack of participation at the systemic level. Insights from the literature on worker/democratic/humanistic participation are woven into concluding recommendations.

Introduction

Much of the current, "second wave" educational reform has been couched in the language of teacher participation and empowerment.[1] At the national as well as state level, policy makers and advocates have called for the development of collegial models for teachers' work and greater involvement of teachers in decisions that affect their work.[2]

These calls have stimulated reform initiatives and academic writings. Large urban districts, for instance, have implemented school restructuring featuring site-based management, shared decision-making, problem-solving teams (Hess, 1992). Conley (1991) has reviewed the literature on teacher participation from the perspectives of the four frames of administrative theory, but this literature has not been analyzed from a critical perspective. This paper begins such a task. It reviews the dominant approaches that inform the discussion and implementation of teacher participation and suggests alternative conceptualizations that should expand the range of options available to reform-minded administrators. To the extent possible, I also highlight some programmatic implications of these alternatives; however, the main purpose of the paper is not to provide an empirical basis for sound practice but to engage in the conceptual clarification that is one of its prerequisites.

Teacher Participation: Whose Agendas?

Clarifying one's terms of reference and thus making their conceptual "baggage" visible has repercussions for administrative practice. Yet, as Conley (1991) has observed, much of the discussion on participation has proceeded in seeming unawareness

of the different meanings of the term. These meanings will vary depending on one's conceptual framework, political orientation--in general, one's standpoint. For instance, whereas the excluded or disenfranchised may seek participation in order to gain some control over decisions affecting their lives (or, indeed, may refuse it if the prospects of such gains are not great), those in positions of control may see participation as a way to gain subordinates' commitment for existing goals, or to increase productivity, mollify, and the like. One's agenda, then, becomes a sifting device leading to an emphasis on certain aspects of the concept and a silence on others. Part of the task of critique involves recovering these silences, making them part of the conversation.

The starting point for this paper is a clarification of the range of definitions and agendas undergirding present calls for teacher empowerment and involvement. I propose that these calls have been framed almost exclusively in terms that advance management and administrative agendas for reform. Using the language of leadership, collaboration, and service to the common good, they transform the problem of hierarchical relations in schools and school districts into a problem of communication, commitment to a vision, and professionalism, to be addressed through inter-group dynamics and a combination of bureaucratic and human relations approaches. In so doing, they obscure the presence of disempowering practices and structures embedded in the daily lives of most teachers and students.

From the dominant structural-human relations perspective of administration, participation refers to the involvement of teachers (workers) in structures of authority and decision-making traditionally considered the prerogatives of management. It does

not suggest a specific kind of involvement. Industrial worker participation spans a broad spectrum across the technical and strategic domains (Conley, 1991), from technical teams and worker advisory committees, to worker self-management. However, the term is useful insofar as it is part of a conceptual framework that admits the existence of hierarchy in workplace relationships. "Worker participation" starts from the recognition of the common distinction between "workers" and "managers" and aims to effect a change in this division of labor by including workers in "management" decisions.

This perspective can serve to correct the administrative biases of current reform efforts, by making the system of control of teachers a visible and central item in the reform agenda, in a way that the language of teacher involvement and professionalism does not. This is not to advocate a narrow labor relations approach styled on the old industrial union model--the professionalization of teachers is clearly an improvement on this past. What is required, instead, is a new discourse that promotes inclusion based on a genuine rather than contrived partnership. As I will elaborate later, in the urban setting, this partnership must extend beyond the school to include community participation and foster not only school change but system change as well.

The Administrative Discourse: Participation as Human Relations Management

For urban schools, the emphasis on teacher involvement belongs to a "second wave" of educational reform that comes on the heels of the basic skills era, and which can be characterized as a shift from Taylorism or "scientific" management toward human relations management. Labor unions mirror this administrative approach,

insofar as their role tends to be restricted to negotiating extrinsic motivators--wages and benefits--and establishing some protection from autocratic management through work rules. As applied to urban schools, the basic skills reforms of the 1980s, with their lock-step curricula, standardized instructional objectives, and use of test results as a "management information system" represent a "hyperrationalized" (Wise, 1979) version of Taylorism (Carlson, 1992).

Present reforms attest to the growing dissatisfaction with Taylorism as the management model for schools. The preferred alternative is now steeped in the human relations school of management, which affirms that workers will be more productive if intrinsic, rather than extrinsic factors, predominate in their motivation to work--that is, if working enables them to satisfy some of their basic psycho-social needs, including affiliation, power, and self-esteem. Involvement thus becomes one of a number of tools used by management to improve workers' morale and satisfaction. It has also been used historically (this is perhaps not a coincidence) to weaken or prevent union activity.

The present emphasis on teacher involvement takes the human relations school one step further, by asserting the superiority of collaborative decision-making over its hierarchical counterpart (Shedd and Bacharach, 1991). It is here that this new management approach to "human resources" begins to use the language of professionalism, without necessarily embracing its essence. According to the new wisdom, a changed authority structure is needed to improve not only teachers' morale but, more importantly, the quality of decisions made in the schools, and so, hopefully, positively affect student learning.[3] Barth typifies these views:

> top-down, hierarchical relationships foster dependency. Teachers learn not to move without orders or permission from the principal; principals learn that they cannot leave 'their' building, lest it disintegrate. Thus dependency immobilizes and distances teacher and principal when what they need to accomplish their important work is maximum mobility, responsibility, and cooperation. (Barth, 1988: 146)

For urban schools, current reform efforts generally do not constitute a total replacement of Taylorism. The standardized curricula and close monitoring of the basic skills era continue for many, while the new "effective schools" credo guides decisions about staff development, staffing, supervision, improvement plans, and the like, that continue to emanate from central offices.

Research generally supports the assertion that teachers who have the authority to make decisions that affect their work (and who are actually engaged in meaningful, collaborative work are part of the foundation of a good school.[4] Scientific management was never appropriate for schools--the argument goes--since their chain of organizational authority is "loosely" rather than "tightly coupled." In the end, as much research has demonstrated, bureaucratic controls are usually stopped by classroom doors. Further, commitment and meaningful participation are considered more likely when teachers and administrators see themselves as members of a community united by a common vision, values, and norms (Sergiovanni, 1992a). The generally accepted conclusion, therefore, is that administrative models based on persuasion and normative approaches are more suitable for educational systems, which should emphasize

leadership, professionalism, and involvement rather than bureaucratic (or "scientific") management.[5]

The reform is not simply a case of putting good research into practice, however. As Boysen aptly suggests, "restructuring wells up from the desperation of the urban school situation and takes its name from the ... ethos of the times" (Boysen, 1992: 91). This ethos favors self-management rather that bureaucratic management and "excellence" through market mechanisms rather than through regulations. It comes to education, in part, via the remaking of corporate America in the Japanese image.[6] This clarifies its management biases. Practices such as site-based management may be couched in the language of "empowerment" but their aim is to recover organizational effectiveness by undercutting the irrationalities and inefficiencies of the bureaucratic organization of work.

The Participatory Discourse: Workplace Democratization

Workplace democratization, never a strong contending model in efforts to reform the educational system, provides a critical vantage point from which to view current initiatives. It affirms the right of workers to participate in decision-making in the workplace and partake of an equitable share of the resources of an organization. These rights are not framed purely in the individualistic terms of liberalism, however, but extend to the creation of a community of equals. As exemplified in worker self-management and worker cooperatives, workplace democracy shares with the human relations approach a belief in the importance of the workers' intrinsic motivation. However, its foundation does not rest on a philosophy of humane management and its

aim is not to improve teacher morale, decisions, and standardized test scores. Rather, it is premised on limiting and eventually eradicating power differentials and reconstructing the workplace as a just, democratic community.

This approach goes well beyond its human relations counterpart but needs to be extended further still. Urban educational settings, in which teachers usually educate "Other" people's children, require that the process of democratization include not only teachers but also students and community members. In its broadest meaning, then, the concept of participation allows teachers, students, and urban community members to participate in an emancipatory discourse.

The last point is of vital importance for urban education. Teacher empowerment, especially in its guise as professionalism, does not, in itself, change the disempowering effects that deficit models of education have on students. On the contrary, professionalization is usually associated with authority over one's "clients" (Larson, 1977; Labaree, 1992). What is more, such social distancing and power differentials, in the context of frequent contact, provides a well-known recipe that, absent other interventions, may increase the professionals' prejudicial views of the less powerful "Other."

Multiculturalism in the curriculum and initiatives to revision urban learners, to discover their cultural strength and personal "resilience" hold some promise (Research for Better School, 1992; Werner and Smith, 1992). However, although well intended, they may fall into the same traps as human relations management: relying on paternalistic leadership (in this case, the teachers') as the instrument of change, and

accepting existing structures as givens. The construction of reality of teachers is not free from distorting influences (Sleeter, 1992; Anderson and Blase, 1993). The need is not so much for teachers to embrace multiculturalism and revision urban learners as culturally endowed rather than culturally deprived. It is, rather, for urban learners to be empowered to find and speak in their own voice.

Such a definition of the task requires a shift in the role of teachers' organizations, such as unions, from the imposed narrow boundaries of wages and work conditions to one that affirms and protects the rights and responsibilities of teachers as educators.

This broadening of the definition of workplace democracy, then, remedies one of the potential ills of other forms of teacher involvement, which may serve the narrow interest of teachers while leaving the voice of students unheard. It is also, of course, a cause of difficulty, since the model evokes the specter of power struggles, as occurred in the community control debacles of the 1960s and early 1970s. How to benefit from the insights of the model while minimizing the potential for paralyzing conflict is something to which I will return later.

Teacher Participation and Leadership

In the practice of school reform, teacher participation and empowerment have been nearly eclipsed by a discourse of leadership that is more congruent with the administrative mindset. This discourse, however, is expanded to include two "new" types of leadership: transformational (Leithwood, 1992) and shared (Barth, 1990).

Unlike managerial or transactional leaders who are adept at system maintenance,

transformational leaders are said to have the ability to overcome obstacles creatively and to articulate visions that become guides to system change. This construct borrows heavily from the concept of "charisma," a special quality allowing a leader to transform environments resistant to change. In the words of Terrence Deal, "managers solve problems. Leaders confront dilemmas. . . . Educational leaders must create artful ways to reweave organizational tapestries from old traditions, current realities, and future visions." (1987: 12)

This task is not accomplished in isolation. Overcoming the barriers of bureaucracy, "boss" management, and cynicism, the new brand of administrators become "synergy czars," who facilitate collaborative planning and problem solving (Kanter, 1989). By fostering school cultures that encourage the talents, creativity, and contributions of all their members, they elicit from teachers extraordinary, intrinsically motivated work performance that goes beyond the call of duty. They possess the "moral imagination" that enables them to articulate a vision and sustain its pursuit even in difficult times (Sheive and Schoenheit, 1987: 96-98).

Some educators take leadership further (Leithwood, 1992). Transformational leadership may be seen as the first step toward the development of "communities of leaders" or democratic schools, with the leader presumably becoming "first among equals" once the followers have reached the age of responsibility. Promoted by influential organizations such as Harvard's Principals' Center, the National Education Association, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (Barth, 1988: 143-44), this type of organization is modeled on the collegial community of professionals

and should not be confused with workplace democratization. Organizations that adopt the collegial model with ease tend to be socially and culturally homogeneous, a fact that should alert us to the difficulty of large-scale application to urban settings (Anderson, 1991).

Shared leadership shades into a discourse on organizational culture that further downplays formal and informal networks of power and authority and emphasizes shared meanings, "heroes," rituals, and stories (Deal, 1987: 6). Sergiovanni notes that "both professionalism and leadership are frequently prescribed as cures for school problems, but in many ways the two concepts are antithetical. The more professionalism is emphasized, the less leadership is needed." (1992b: 42) Whereas in the framework of transformational leadership it is the principal's task to articulate a vision, here this becomes a community-wide task.

This conceptualization of change is called forth, in part, to overcome the dangers of transformational or charismatic leaders, whose challenges to tradition may succeed but not outlast their tenure. Thus transformational leaders may leave teachers vulnerable to shifts in administration, unless they succeed in institutionalizing the changes they fostered. The relatively high turnover of teachers in urban schools presents an added difficulty for sustaining changes in the school culture: these could prove ephemeral, unless accompanied by structural changes that foster continuity, such as involving stable elements of the local community in school decision-making and personnel selection.

The new leadership and cultural approaches represent improvements over

bureaucratic management, yet they remain problematic. Their power to transform (Leithwood, 1992; Kirby, Paradise & King, 1992) is hampered by a triple handicap. I have already alluded to the problems they encounter when facing the institutionalization of change. There remain two difficulties relating, on the one hand, to interest-based constructions of reality and, on the other, to system change versus school change. These are all intensified in the context of urban schools.

Problem 1: Whose Interests does Participation Serve?

To say that constructions of reality are interest-based means not only that reality is seen through the particular lenses of one's social status but also that some particularistic constructions are successfully passed on as universal truths. The recurring call in the literature for developing leaders who are then able to empower teachers (Barth, 1990; Stimson and Appelbaum, 1988; Maeroff, 1988) typifies one such construction. It does so via the vehicle of paternalism. As both the literature and experience suggests, members of organizations at the higher reaches of the hierarchy (that is, principals, supervisors, superintendents) tend to construct reality in ways that allow them to see themselves as part of the solution, while viewing those of lower rank and status (teachers, unions--and, in urban settings, pupils and their families) as part of the problem. Principals, in particular, tend to believe, amidst the fragmentation of bureaucratic specialties and constituencies, they are the only ones who think about the good of the school as a whole (Conley, 1991). Differences in social class, race, and gender magnify these tendencies.

"Empowerment" by management fiat allows the dominant discourse to prevail. Worker empowerment in industry, for instance, is defined as "empowerment to do the job, ... to learn from mistakes, ... to modify processes, and ... to suggest process changes to other team members" (Davis, 1992: 5). For Xerox (a trailblazer in fostering a collaborative, "team" organization), it "means that people gain more control, or power, over their own jobs. They make more decisions about how work is done, about when it is done, and sometimes even about what work is done" (Xerox manual, cited in Davis, 1992: 5. Emphasis mine). Limiting worker participation to "line" or technical domains allows management prerogative in "strategic" areas to remain unchallenged.

If power is defined as the ability to control one's environment, then the definitions given above diminish and belittle the term. Indeed, a recent ethnographic study in the engineering division of a high tech corporation, appropriately called Engineering Culture (Kunda, 1991), captures the oppressive components underneath the veneer of a progressive corporate culture. The environment over which one has "power" is here carefully limited to what Carnoy and Levin (1985: 216-29) describe as the micro-technical and, to a lesser extent, the micro-political levels--for instance, changes of some instructional materials and teachers' classroom roles.

Problem 2: The Locus of Change

Micro-technical and micro-political changes leave the wider system of decision-making and resource distribution untouched and unchallenged; yet it is this system that defines conditions in all schools, and is especially devastating for urban schools. According to veteran teachers in Detroit, Milwaukee, and Cleveland, it is "the context

inside and outside the workplace [that is] the single most critical factor influencing success in urban teaching." (Pasch et al, 1993: 24)

Readers might counter my statement by pointing to empirical evidence that teachers seem to have little interest in "strategic" decisions. And yet, as Conley (1991) observes, the line dividing these two domains may be a convenient myth. More importantly, however, these studies do not take into account the stage of participation at which teachers' views are tapped, and the possibility of "conscientization" (Freire, 1985) occurring through the practice of participation. A limited desire for participation is to be expected in the context of the prevalence of bureaucratic organizational structures. It is instructive that a few segments of the labor movement question the "team" concept, collaborative decision-making, and the like, noting that the new emphasis on collaboration, in the absence of real democratization and equity, is likely to leave workers--and teachers--with much responsibility but little power (Carlson, 1992). For urban teachers, this spells the inability to alter the crucial conditions that perpetuate students' failure. Yet, where are the voices to create and the power to bring to the fore a discourse that melds the quest for equity and genuine empowerment with the concern for community and social responsibility?

Although there are some suggestions that teachers' organizations and unions in general are redefining their role (see Shedd and Bacharach, 1991), real alternative "constructions of reality" are yet to emerge from that sector. Suffering from decimated ranks and ideological attacks, many labor unions, especially at the national levels, have endorsed corporate versions of "empowerment" without much redefinition (Shedd and

Bacharach, 1991). Meanwhile, at the local level, administrators' perceptions of unions as obstacles to be overcome remains strong. When asked about the role of labor unions in the school restructuring process, one hears about agreements to put aside provisions of the contract more often than about proactive union initiatives.

Part of the difficulty for workers' organizations and teachers' interests lies in the fact that the "team" organization is premised on a family or community model moreso than a contractual one. Thus the very notion of interests is viewed as narrow self-seeking at the expense of the "community." In the community, as in the family, individuals collaborate in pursuit of the common good. In practice, of course, the relationship between individual members and the "organization-as-community" is seldom steeped in reciprocity and the interests of some prevail, masqueraded as the common good, while the needs of others are subordinated and delegitimized.

If this is always a problem in hierarchical organization, it is a huge one in urban schools. The evident, pressing need, the call to work for the common good by "putting the children first," may lead to the expectation of all sorts of sacrifices (and accusations of selfishness if these are not forthcoming) on the part of teachers. Work intensification, contrived collegiality and cynicism then thrive, while administrative constructions of reality erode the position of teachers at the expense of real transformation (Hargreaves, 1992). Teachers may indeed be willing to define the common good in ways that require them to "do more" but should be fully informed and full participants in such decisions rather than being pressured and manipulated into them.

That is not to say that attempts at changing schools through the act of "cultural revisioning" are entirely misguided. Such calls may serve as powerful reconnections with the sense that, more than a job or even a profession, education is or should be a calling. They serve as a corrective to the excesses of the "possessive individualism" of the liberal project, which fosters an exclusivist (and ultimately alienating) rights orientation that has little regard for community.[7]

The danger, however, is that in asserting the primacy of lofty goals and a common vision, these calls become no more than an ideology that delegitimizes dissent and alternative definitions of the common good. To advocate cultural revisioning without also addressing organizational structures and resource allocation poses the danger of adding ideological domination to bureaucratic control. As history has amply demonstrated, in socially differentiated societies we must apply a litmus test to invocations to the common good, regardless of their ethical and emotional appeal: we must ask if they attempt to maintain social cohesion and solidarity at the expense of social justice. The words "professional" and "cooperative"--as Shedd and Bacharach remind us--have often been used to describe teachers who were servile and anti-union and who did not question administrative decisions (1991: 181). We should not ignore the warning that "the issue ... is not whether individuals are motivated or basically competent to perform their jobs, but whether they can perform well given their conditions of work and the resources they have available" (National Education Association, 1988: 9).

The issues of resources and the contexts of urban teachers' work provide a link

to the second difficulty for existing change models: the emphasis on the school as the unit of analysis. The dictum that change occurs "one school at a time" has some merit but should not be invoked to obscure the need for systemic change. When principals are most appreciated in their role as maintainers of adequate physical facilities and providers of extra resources, and teachers must forage for basic teaching necessities; when local and state education leaders continue to closely monitor processes, centrally plan curricula and staff development, demand "improvement plans" designed to increase standardized test scores, and exercise all sorts of bureaucratic controls; when the resource base of education continues to perpetuate gross inequalities--that is when teachers may be justified in a cynical appraisal of "quality circles" and involvement in school decision-making. Corcoran, Walker, and White summarize the situation well, noting that "the proposed dramatic changes in the teaching profession . . . are distant from the day-to-day lives of most urban teachers" (1988: 2). More to the point, the reforms may serve less as mechanisms for across-the-board improvements, than as rationales for shifting the onus of dealing with budgetary reductions and the blame for failure to the newly restructured schools and "empowered" teachers.[8]

Implications for Urban School Reform

The discussion so far has suggested some of the difficulties with current concepts and practices of teacher participation in school reform, with particular reference to urban schools. What insights and programs does this critique suggest for the change agenda? How can a truly inclusive discourse be promoted, one that bridges the distance between school and community?

The human relations discourse limits its focus to the organization (the school, the district) and thus omits consideration of essential variables that can stand in the way of its aims. Inner-city schools, as Comer observed, can be characterized by degrees of alienation, suspicion, cliques, and futility that are profoundly demoralizing (in Payne, 1991). Part of the problem may be corrected by motivational human relations strategies; but student failure--and students' ways of coping with it--are a more intractable source of malaise, less amenable to change through teacher participation alone.

The same is true of promoting participation to improve the quality of decision-making. Improved decisions are said to result from the greater knowledge teachers possess, as "line professionals" about the school's "clients." Again, in inner-city schools, it is reasonable to question the degree to which teachers "know" and understand their students. Recall that frequent contact among social unequals may <u>increase</u> rather than decrease prejudice. In such cases, the teachers' knowledge is filtered through the distorting lenses of race, class, and diversity.

The students and the community, therefore, hold the key to improved teacher satisfaction and decision making. Thus the paradox, that in order to achieve human relations aims, we must move outside the usual terms of reference of the framework. In the context of the critical perspective, these limitations become even more pronounced, since the point is not simply to have smoothly running schools and reasonably satisfied teachers, but to promote social justice and human development.

Including the voice of students and the community requires a change in

perspective from students as culturally deprived and "at-risk" to students as potentially resilient, economically deprived and socially silenced. This is the most daunting and essential task in reforming urban schools. It requires new models of professional development that put educators in the community, and new models of learning that allow students to understand and respect themselves and their communities less from the psychological perspective of self-esteem and more from the sociological perspective of empowerment.

What are the likely carriers for this change? If the Chicago experience provides any indication, such an agenda is likely to test the limits of principals' transformational leadership (Payne, 1991). The suggestion of extending participation will not gladden many a principal's heart. Nor are these concerns and even resistance purely self-serving and illogical. When one considers the proliferation and balkanization of "community" groups with narrow, self-serving agendas focused on specific rights and entitlements (James, 1991), it is appropriate to ask who owns and speaks for the schools (Sarason, 1990). It may also be wise to see these fragmented contestants as likely disruptors whose presence, if at all warranted, requires careful management. But how should the managing be done? These are the likely limits of principal leadership.

The search for alternatives seems to lead in the direction of community--not the homogeneous, tradition-bound community of the past, nor the benevolent authoritarianism discussed earlier, but a "new," democratic community that manages to grow through diversity. Comer's project appears to owe its success not so much to new teaching and curriculum interventions (although mainstream social skills are part of the

curriculum) but to the fact that it creates a sense of community, to its insight that "power can be redistributed in ways that foster more positive human relationships" (Payne, 1991: 15). However, it does not pointedly address the new structures needed to link empowered local organizations into wider networks, including the city and state level, needed in order to gain access to resources and not slip into a regressive autarky. Without attention to this issue, especially in light of the fiscal crisis, community-based schools may become little more than adjuncts to local business organizations.

As the Comer project and radical restructuring efforts such as Chicago's attest, the momentum for inclusive participation comes from sheer despair (such as economic and social trends suggesting a deepening of distress and a continuing fiscal crisis) and the power of human agency to forge new solutions. Conflicts will be inevitable. They can, however, be approached in ways that forge new paths toward understanding across diversity. New strategies are emerging, through which conflict may become a path to human, ethical, and community development that deepens understanding of the other, as opposed to current "problem-solving" styles that foster adversarial and individualistic dialogues (Folger & Bush, 1994). Although fraught with dangers, one might even consider Sacken's (1991) suggestion that removing the possibility of recourse to higher levels or non-school agencies (i.e. the courts) would impose limits on political gameplans and force local resolutions of issues.[9]

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

It is time to return to the original question, informed by an increased understanding: how can teacher participation in urban schools be maximized? The

task of conceptual clarification yields several insights relevant for change agents.

1. Teachers need to understand the assumptions on which reform models are based and the implications of given change agendas for institutionalizing the reform. In urban school districts with high mobility of teachers between schools, such efforts would best be undertaken at the district level rather than by each school involved in reform. However, given the understandable reluctance of the administrative hierarchy to address the issue of power, one should not rely on the school district and professional development activities under its aegis to bring this discussion into the open. This task is more appropriate for professional organizations, "new" unions, and third parties. Principals also need a greater understanding of these processes, to be acquired under conditions similar to those of the teachers.

2. Professional development activities about school reform should inform teachers and principals about how to institutionalize channels for open communications, conflict resolution, and the perpetuation of the reforms. Much of the present training (for instance, developing trust and working in teams) is insufficient and ineffective because it ignores the effects of power relations. Trust is important, but protection against the unwarranted actions of a superior can be just as effective or more in opening up communications. Establishing open communication between teachers and principals is a worthwhile goal, but creating the avenues to communicate openly with the <u>next</u> principal is essential. What is needed are mediating structures that allow opinions and disagreements to emerge in a responsible and non-threatening atmosphere and formal structures of participation that allow reforms to outlast the reformers. In a nation that

prides itself in its political democracy, there is no lack of models for institutionalizing such structures.

3. "Cultural" approaches can be effective catalysts of change. There is no doubting the power of a common vision, a sense of community responsibility, and an ethical and caring belief system that informs both personal and institutional actions. Not only is it appropriate and beneficial for educators to recapture the essence of their field as a calling, but such a revisioning can mitigate the conflicts that emerge when the long-powerless find a voice. However, cultural approaches must have safeguards to ensure that all voices are heard and dissent does not become destructive. The organizational structure is the carrier and maintainer of the culture. Again, mediating structures must be created.

4. Many urban schools, including those involved in restructuring, remain under the tutelage of bureaucratic reforms initiated in the basic skills era: "one best way" approaches to instruction, standardized curricula aligned to standardized testing, and so on. In such circumstances, reform cannot proceed "one school at a time" but must include a "package" and schedule for systemic change that has the support and commitment of the district and state bureaucracy. In urban districts, this means finding ways to minimize the risks of removing controls. The replacement of bureaucratic monitoring of processes with assessment of learning outcomes is one possible way. However, such assessments must go well beyond basic skills, standardized testing.

5. Including the voice of students and the community requires a change in perspective from seeing students as culturally deprived and "at-risk" to seeing them as

economically deprived and socially silenced. This is the most daunting and essential task in reforming urban schools. It requires new models of professional development that put educators in the community, and new models of learning that allow students to understand and respect themselves and their communities less from the psychological perspective of self-esteem and more from the sociological perspective of empowerment. A program in Arizona, for instance, sends teachers to their students' homes as ethnographers and then engages them in curriculum revisions informed by their new knowledge. Such approaches need to complement the more common projects that send students into their community to discover its history, but leave the teachers unchanged.

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FOOTNOTES

1. I wish to thank my colleagues, Joan Shapiro and Larry Parker, for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2. See, for instance, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1986, 1988; National Governors' Association, 1986; National Education Association & National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1986. I agree with Corcoran, 1987 (cited in Conley, 1991, p. 243) that "collegiality," which operates on the horizontal, peer level, should not be included in the concept of participation--unless it is part of a movement to "flatten" a hierarchical organization of authority. For instance, "participatory evaluation" or "participatory democracy" suggests access to a previously vertical or exclusionary

authority structure.

3. The correlation between teacher participation and learning improvements is far from firmly established. See Conley, 1991.

4. Studies conducted in educational settings show a correlation between teacher participation and job satisfaction, increased morale, and reduced burnout. Innovative and effective schools are characterized by collaboration between teachers and administrators and collegial cultures. Recent experience in corporate settings suggests that involvement improves the quality of management decisions and enhances effectiveness by allowing an organization to respond quickly to changed environments. For a review, see Shedd and Bacharach, 1991: 130-41; Fullan, 1991.

5. See Sheive and Schoenheit, 1987, for a brief review of the organizational literature.

6. Industries such as Xerox and the trailblazing Herman Miller (the Michigan visionary furniture makers) are offering the gospel of worker involvement, teams, and "total quality management" as the new answer to educational excellence. See DePree, 1989; Davis, 1992.

7. C. B. MacPherson's (1962) thesis is that the enormous success of the liberal-capitalist economy encouraged people to insist on and even "invent" a proliferation of individual needs and rights. The economy's ability to generally satisfy material needs facilitated the subsequent translation of these needs into more abstract wants (expressed in political, economic, aesthetic, or legal terms) and a corresponding insistence on individual possessiveness and autonomy. Of course, this process undermined notions of social responsibility and community.

8. In the Chicago site-based management reform, no budgetary allocations were made for the Local School Councils, who did not even have the funds to open school buildings for their own meetings (Payne, 1991).

9. In restructuring in Chicago, authority devolved to the school level rather than the subdistrict level, as in the 1970s New York experiment, precisely because New York subdistricts had been the locus of political power plays (Payne, 1991).